

## There's a Boa in My Bathtub

"A what?" asked my friend on the other end of the phone.

"A Boa, as in Constrictor," I responded with some degree of pride.

That was then; this is now . . . and "now" is devoid of both snake and pride.

It all started on a Friday afternoon, when an array of science teachers were standing in the Lake Highlands School hall, lamenting a situation. I walked up. "There's a problem?" I asked. That was my first mistake.

"Definitely," they responded in unison. "Unless, of course, you might have an extra bathtub or two in your home."

"No problem," I responded . . . too quickly. "My bathtub is at your command. Name it." That was my second mistake.

"Its name is Sebastian. And its species is Boa Constrictor; otherwise known as snake." Pam, the science chair, is just too quick and too clever I thought to myself.

"Sebastian," she went on, "has had a little problem in shedding his skin. Yes, the kids named her before we checked her gender," Pam included almost parenthetically. "So, we called the vet and were told that Sebastian needs to hangout in some warm water, as in a bathtub, over the weekend allowing the skin that seems to be stuck on her eye, to soften and fall off."

Hence, the boa in my bathtub.

That is, *was* in my bathtub.

After filling the tub; tossing in a few sponges (you know, to rub her eye up against . . .) and delicately testing the water temperature on my wrist, as if for a newborn, I gingerly lifted Sebastian from the aquarium in my car and dramatically carried her past my newspaper-reading husband. "New pet?" he asked barely looking up.

"You can be so blasé about such beauty?," I asked, hurt as much for my lack of dramatic effect for the snake's unappreciated six foot, diamond-studded skin. Undaunted, I continued to the bathroom, laid Sebastian carefully in the three inches of water and watched wondering if I was going to see what hysteria in a snake might look like.

Hysteria was not overtly obvious. Incidents later, however, let me know that trauma had presented itself and would be manifested in Sebastian's actions over the next 24 hours:

Three hours after arrival Sebbie (we had become familiar by now) is out of the tub, on the floor with only her head showing from under the wooden encased sink. The head was the give-away . . . to the trauma that is. Sebbie is waving her head back and forth; double time, with her body stark still.

The next day a peek in the bathroom shows two inches of tail sticking out from under the sink. Sebbie is hiding . . . kind of like my son, "ran away from home" . . . to the top of the roof.

Hour 11 - a neighbor drops by. We introduce him to Sebbie, who by now is half out from under the wooden encased sink. Steve bends down to pick the poor, star-studded, trauma-ridden snake up. Sebastian coils and recoils and poof! Right before our eyes, she is gone up into the wall.

Hour 11:05 - blasé husband is getting interested in the whole situation. He suggests going to the pet store, getting mice and planting them in the aquarium in the bathroom, thereby attracting said snake.

Three mice cost \$4.79. They are handed to us in a plain, brown paper bag. "Only present one mouse at a time," warns the salesman. How did he know we were just going to dump them all in at once? And to our next question, he answers, "Oh, don't worry. Once you get the mouse in the aquarium, there's no way he can climb out."

Husband is beginning to take interest in the "chase." He glories in his ability to cut one diagonal off the stapled bag, just right, so that only one mouse shakes out of the bag into the aquarium. Now he gloats, "We'll watch the fun!"

Hour 12 - nothing.

Hour 13 - I hear loud banging from the other room. Husband is yelling, "Quick! Do we have something to catch him? He's gotten out."

More banging. I rush into the hall. Wild-eyed mouse is darting left and right as husband is trying to bash him with a broom. "Whomp!" He got him. Said mouse is lying on his back but with his feet moving . . . dazed but not dead. Husband says he saw the mouse crawl out into the hall from under the bathroom door. He returns the mouse to the aquarium in the bathroom. He then grabs several towels and stuffs them in the crack between the door and the floor. He then goes back to his reading.

Hour 15 – A peek before bedtime finds Sebbie lying on the bathroom floor after deciding to return to the land of the living. He looks at us with a satisfied expression on his face. We can see a bulge in his mid-torso. We all slept well that night.

Not knowing what to do with the remaining mice, we fed them to Sebbie the next day. The weekend being over we returned Sebbie to his classmates in school. During all the commotion, the skin stuck to Sebbie's eyelid had come off.

Mission accomplished. Everyone was happy . . . except, perhaps, for three little mice.

Patricia Blackledge Blide  
Lake Highlands High School Teacher